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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 008275

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2015

TAGS: [EG](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S 10/29 MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
ABOUL GHEIT

Classified By: Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Subject: Egypt: Ambassador,s 10/29 Meeting with Foreign
Minister Aboul Gheit

[11](#). (C)Summary: Ambassador met with FM Aboul Gheit on October [129](#). Sticking close to the brief he gave the Secretary on October 28, the FM reported on President Mubarak,s trip to Syria. He repeated that the Asad regime had indicated a readiness to change its behavior, including on Iraq, but worried that the USG was putting too much pressure on Syria. The Ambassador replied that pressure was warranted, a point on which the Egyptian government has agreed in numerous consultations. Aboul Gheit praised the Israeli MinDef Mowfaz visit and predicted swift progress on opening the border crossing at Rafah. On MDA, the Foreign Minister insisted that Egypt was not blocking progress and that a process well under way. He had met with Swiss Foreign Minister earlier in the day; she would meet with the parties in Ramalla on October 30. Aboul Gheit also welcomed the visit of Iraqi NSA in November and reported that he will attend only the opening dinner of the Forum for the Future in Bahrain on November 11 but will miss the meeting on the 12th.

Mubarak's Trip to Syria

[12](#). (C) Ambassador met on October 29, Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit, fresh from his brief trip to Syria with President Mubarak the previous day. Noting the series of communications late on Thursday evening between the GOE and the Embassy and later the Department urging Mubarak not to go, Aboul Gheit insisted that the trip had been swift, low-key and had provided no succor for the Asad regime. Recapping Mubarak's demands -- cooperation on the Mehlis investigation, stopping the foreign fighters from entering Iraq, hands-off in Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority -- he claimed that Syria had indicated a "readiness" to move forward. As in his conversation with the Secretary, Aboul Gheit was unable to point to any specific commitments by Assad to change Syrian behavior, but he maintained that Mubarak's message elicited a "readiness" by the Asad regime to change.

[13](#). (C) On the draft UNSC resolution under discussion in New York, Aboul Gheit professed vague objections that it put too much pressure on the Syrians. For example, he complained the language in Op Para 3, which would freeze the funds of individuals suspected by the Commission of involvement with the Hariri assassination or those held by entities owned or controlled, directly or indirectly. Does this mean, the FM queried that if Farouk Shara comes under investigation, the international community would be obliged to freeze all assets held by the Syrian Foreign Ministry? The Ambassador replied that the pressure was warranted and needed at this time. The Egyptian government has agreed on this point in several conversations. We saw nothing inappropriate in the draft; if the Syrian Chief of Intelligence has assets in Lebanon -- public or private -- why shouldn't they be seized? In any nation conducted under the rule of law, credible allegations of conspiracy to commit murder would precipitate a resignation from high office.

Mowfaz Visit

[14](#). (C) Aboul Gheit praised the recent visit of Israeli Minister of Defense Mowfaz on October 27, visit as excellent. Noting that it fell prior to the Hadera bombing, he said that the Israelis had committed to moving forward quickly on Rafah. He boasted that the Egyptians are ready now to open the border crossing at Rafah at any time, but had promised not to move forward without Israeli concurrence. Pressed for a date when Rafah might open, the FM referred the Ambassador to EGIS Director Omar Soliman, but added it would be soon. (Note: Ambassador will meet with Soliman on October 30.) He reported that the Israelis would, as expected, insist on a third party observer at Rafah. He refused to say that the third party would be the EU. Aboul Gheit also praised Quartet Representative James Wolfensohn,s recent remarks about delays on progress in Gaza as very useful.

Mowafaq Al Rubaie

15. (C) Ambassador noted that Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowafaq Al Rubaie would visit Cairo November 9-10 as a guest of EGIS Director Omar Soliman. We hoped that the Foreign Minister would see him as well. Aboul Gheit readily agreed. Pressed on the status of the appointment of an Iraqi ambassador to Cairo, the FM said that he was waiting for Iraq FM Zebari to send him a new name.

MDA

16. (C) Aboul Gheit pushed back hard on the Ambassador's suggestion that Egypt was blocking progress on MDA. He said he had issued clear instructions to Geneva: "We are not obstructing but we are working in the context of the Arab group and we have to follow the group." He added that he had just met with the Swiss Foreign Ministry earlier in the same day. He said the issue has now boiled down to process; she had told him that the Israeli government should provide the Palestinian Authority with a letter with clear language on exactly how the MDA emblem would be (not) be used in the occupied territories. There will be an iftar in Ramallah tomorrow to discuss the issue. The PA was insisting on a commitment from the Israeli government, not just from MDA. The Israelis, he reported, are also looking for an exception for allowing the emblem to be used in the territories in the case of an emergency or natural disaster but he predicted that this exception would not be granted.

17. (C) Returning to the issue of Egypt's role, the FM said that "too many games are being played on this issue. Egypt is being blamed unfairly. We do not want to see the 'star' used in the occupied territories, this would set a precedent that these territories are still contested. But we will not block; we will not incite."

Forum for the Future

18. (C) Aboul Gheit said that he plans to attend the official dinner on the eve of Forum for the Future in Bahrain, on November 11, but will not stay for the meeting on November 12. He said he was doing this "as a courtesy to the Bahraini hosts."

RICCIARDONE